A/AC.172/1993/CRP.14/Add.6
19 May 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Substantive session
Agenda item 12*

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Imre KARBUCZKY (Hungary)

Addendum

III. CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

A. Provision of written meetings records to subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly

Introduction and overview

1. In its resolution 36/117 A, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to undertake a comprehensive study of the rationale underlying the provision of meeting records to United Nations organs. Having considered the report of the Committee, the Assembly, in its resolution 37/14 C, decided that, for an experimental period of three years, no subsidiary organ of the Assembly should be entitled to summary records, with the seven exceptions laid down in that resolution.

2. That experimental period was subsequently extended until 31 December 1990 by General Assembly resolutions 40/243, 41/177 D and 44/196 B. In its resolution 45/238 B of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly decided, pending a further decision of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences, that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would be entitled to summary records with the exception of the seven bodies laid down in resolution 37/14 C. The Assembly also decided that summary records would continue to be provided to regular and special sessions of the following governing bodies: the

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* A/AC.172/150/Add.1.

Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

3. In paragraph 14 of its resolution 47/202 B of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences to review the criteria for, status of and guidelines on the provision of written meeting records, and requested the Committee, taking into account the costs of conference-servicing, to report thereon to the General Assembly with concrete recommendations at its forty-eighth session. In paragraph 18 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretariat to pursue the possibility of issuing the verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only, on the understanding that those records would be issued as promptly as the provisional ones are issued at present.

4. At its 347th meeting, on 18 May 1993, the Committee on Conferences reviewed a report concerning the criteria, status and guidelines on the provision of written meeting records (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.6) and a report on the possibility of issuing the verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only (A/AC.172/1993/CRP.7).

Discussion

5. The Secretariat observed that the two criteria established by the General Assembly for the provision of summary records to a body were that its subject-matter should be sufficiently substantive and that the cost should be in proportion to the benefit derived. The Office of Conference Services was experiencing some difficulty in the production of summary records, and sought the Committee's guidance in that connection. The possibility was being considered of issuing verbatim records of the Security Council in final form only.

6. The Committee expressed the view that meeting records should be provided for political and legal bodies, while others should reconsider their need for records. Although sound recordings might be considered as an alternative, their use would not reflect the rationale underlying written records. Despite the delays in the issuance of summary records, they were of value, particularly for smaller delegations. While delays could be reduced if records were initially issued in the original language version without waiting for translation into other languages, such a practice would violate the principle of simultaneous distribution.

7. Notwithstanding the introduction of technological innovations, increased workload and reduced staffing within the Office of Conference Services meant that it would have to be strengthened in the next biennium if meeting records were to be issued as expected. Another possibility was to curtail the overall volume of documentation.

8. The Secretariat provided clarification of a number of points raised in the conference room papers. There would be some easing of the resource situation if the posts frozen in the Office of Conference Services were restored.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee reaffirmed that written meeting records were necessary for some bodies of a political or legal nature and were important in the work of delegations.

10. Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 45/238 B, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly should instruct all bodies currently entitled to written meeting records to review the need for such records, with a view to deciding whether they should be discontinued or maintained for some or all of their meetings. Should a body conclude that its records should be maintained, it should make a recommendation to that effect to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session through the Committee on Conferences with appropriate justification.